

# Executive Summary

This report is a summary document of all the water program activities for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). It meets Wisconsin's requirements of Section 305(b) of the federal Clean Water Act to report to Congress on progress in meeting and maintaining the goals of fishable and swimmable waters. Some of the highlights of this report are summarized below:

- Reorganization of the WDNR has resulted in a shift towards watershed management at the local level. This approach to management involves integrated planning for both water and land resources and public participation and partnerships that promote better resource protection.
- The Nonpoint Source program is undergoing a major restructuring aimed at improving water quality through more controls on agricultural runoff and urban nonpoint sources.
- To better assess ecosystem health and water quality impacts, the WDNR is shifting from more conventional water chemistry data collection efforts to relying more on biological monitoring using macroinvertebrates and fish.
- Over the last several years, the WDNR has ordered the removal of a number of dams on streams and rivers because of safety issues related to the age and condition of the structures. Subsequent monitoring data have shown significant improvements in water quality, aquatic habitat and species diversity as a result of removing the dams.
- The WDNR has initiated a new rivers strategy in 1999. Through a more coordinated approach to river management, the strategy is aimed at protecting and restoring riverine ecosystem integrity and balancing river resource uses with environmental needs.
- Monitoring data on the Mississippi River has shown an improvement in the water quality due in a large part to cleanup of point source discharges.
- The WDNR participated in the development of the Lakewide Management Plans (LaMPs) for Lakes Michigan and Superior. Projects have been identified by the WDNR that will help restore and protect the beneficial uses of the Great Lakes' ecosystem once they are implemented.
- New fish consumption advisories were put in place by the WDNR for PCBs starting in 1997. As a result, graduated advisories have been issued for fish with concentrations of < 2 ppm of PCBs to increase public understanding of what levels are safe for consumption.

- A number of contaminated sediment sites have been cleaned up over the last four years and cleanup of more contaminated sites are underway. These efforts have resulted in enhancement of the quality of Wisconsin's surface waters and reduction in public health and environmental risks.
- The WDNR is in the process of combining all classified waters into one administrative code (NR 104) and having those waters available on the Geographic Information System (GIS).
- The Wastewater Management program is creating a new informational database called System for Wastewater Applications, Monitoring and Permits (SWAMP) that will modernize the existing system for WPDES permits.
- Innovative approaches to management, such as watershed-based trading, are being evaluated as additional tools to improve water quality. Such trading shifts in pollutant-loading responsibility can result in more equitable, efficient, and cost-effective ways to address water quality problems.
- Future electronic updates of the tables for the 305b report will be easier because of WDNR efforts to verify and update the data in U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Waterbody System. For this reporting cycle, the WDNR will provide U.S. EPA with an electronic update and hard copy insert of the tables for this narrative report as soon as it is completed, but no later than April 1, 2001.
- Lake management in Wisconsin has been greatly enhanced in the 1990s by the Lake Planning and Protection Grants. These grants have been used for land acquisition, wetland restoration, watershed best management practices and feasibility studies that aid in protecting water quality and improving aquatic habitat.
- With new state funding in the 1999-01 budget, the WDNR has increased information and education efforts to help control the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels and other harmful aquatic nuisance species. New signage at boat landings, public service announcements and aquatic nuisance displays are all examples of efforts to increase boaters' awareness of the problem and solutions.
- Permitted wetland losses have dropped significantly as a result of implementation of wetland standards in NR 103 and the adoption of county shoreland protection ordinances.
- The WDNR has implemented the Source Water Assessment Program (SWAP) as required in the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. The implementation of SWAP will protect public health by helping prevent contamination of public water supplies and assuring an abundant supply of clean water.